65p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

132

Talking to aliens
Ripper riddle—solved?
One man's earthquake
Life before life?
Croiset's critics

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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Cooper's catastrophes

Early this century, a British sea-captain invented a method of predicting disasters such as earthquakes and storms. His theory of 'solectrics' was, indeed, spectacularly successful. CHRIS COOPER investigates

IN THE CHILEAN CITY OF VALPARAISO on the evening of 16 August 1906 there was tension in the air. The naval garrison was on alert. Its commander, Captain Gomez Carreño, had made preparations for a state of emergency. He waited impatiently as dusk fell.

The cause of his agitation was a warning published by the Meteorological Office – a warning not of bad weather but of an earthquake. The source of their prophecy was an English seaman, Captain Cooper of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC). And he had made his prediction as the result of a complicated calculation involving the positions of the Sun, Moon and planets relative to the Earth.

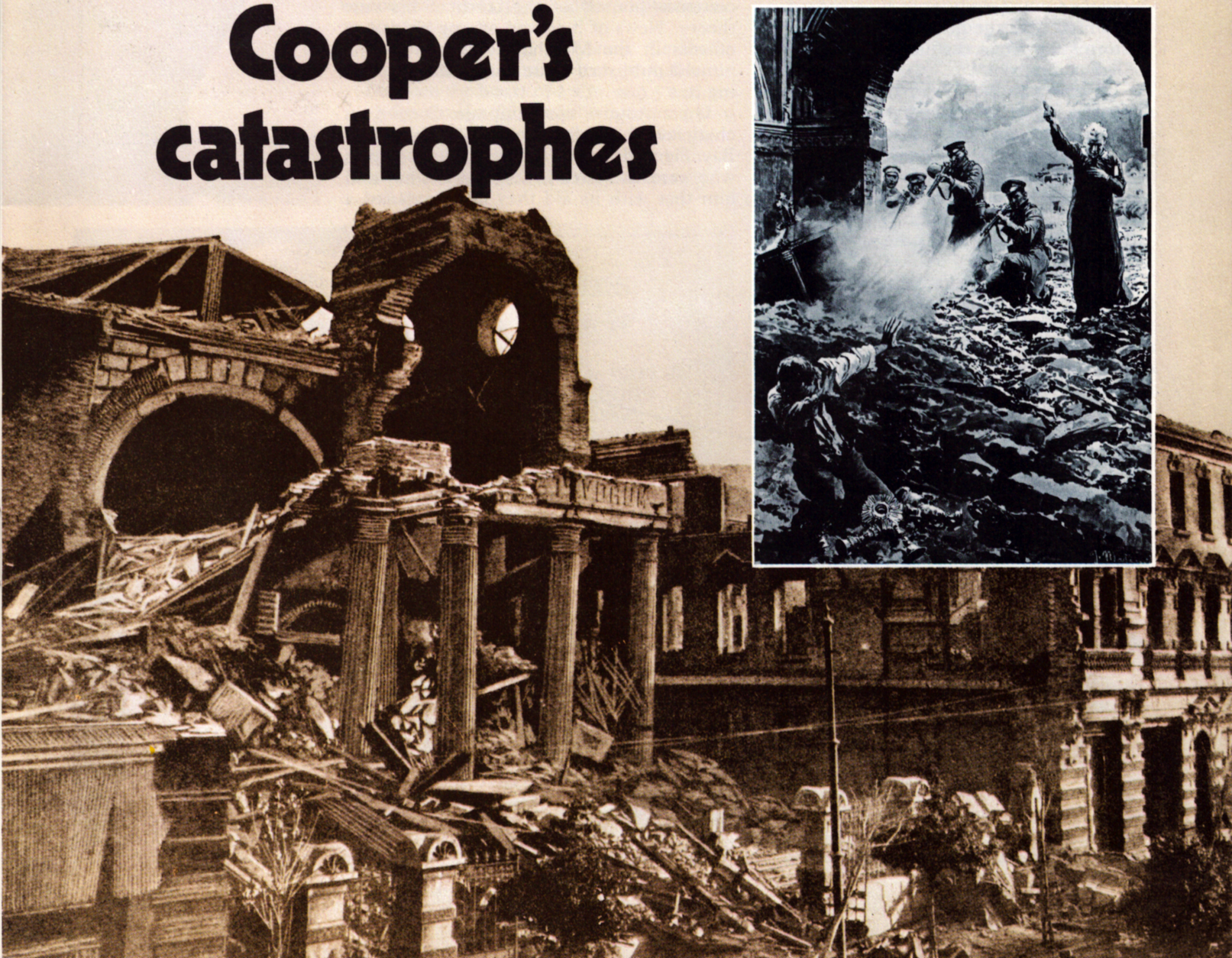
One of the city's British residents telephoned friends at 8 o'clock that night, jokingly reminding them that an earthquake was due. He had only just made the call when the first tremor struck the city.

Elsewhere in the city another British family fled from their dinner table. The last person to take his place had remarked, jocularly, that in a few minutes it would be time for 'Cooper's earthquake'.

It was a calm night, with light rain, when the city began to shake. In the harbour Captain T. M. Taylor of the PSNC rushed onto the deck of the *Orissa*, remembering the prediction:

> The 100-ton crane at the end of the Mole came tumbling down, and all the chains of the other cranes were rattling, and we could hear the people on shore wailing, and the noise of the buildings tumbling down. I said to Mr Gowans, who had come to see me about getting steam, 'We are the only people left alive in the world.' Five minutes afterwards the city was in darkness. I could see electric flashes, all along the face of the hill just like serpents, and directly the place was in a blaze, and lit the bay up just as if it were daylight.

Captain Carreño took prompt action. Looters were rounded up and executed in the



Scenes of desolation in the Chilean city of Valparaiso after the earthquake of 16 August 1906. The catastrophe, in which it was estimated that 10,000 people died and £20 million worth of damage was done, was followed by scenes of looting and civil disorder (inset); 'Before order was assured 680 persons paid the death penalty,' said *The Times* of London. The disaster had been predicted by one Captain Cooper of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, using a theory of his own invention – solectrics, the analysis of the 'solar electric' force

public square. 'Before order was assured 680 persons paid the death penalty,' reported *The Times* of London.

It was later estimated that 10,000 people died and £20 million worth of damage was done in that cataclysm. The main shock of the earthquake, which was unprecedented in the city's memory, lasted fully 4 minutes and 50 seconds. The people of Valparaiso were to pay special attention to the opinions of Captain Cooper thereafter.

Alfred J. Cooper, son of a Sunderland solicitor, took up his first command, the PSNC's steamer *Valdivia*, in 1877, at the age of 30. He was a fine navigator and a man of fertile intellect. He patented a sounding device, and wrote an unorthodox book on the stability of ships. The former was widely adopted; the precepts of the latter were not. In his personal life he was a stern autocrat, an abstainer from drink and tobacco, a polemicist and a moralist.

One subject, however, was the object of his burning passion. He somewhat understated it when he wrote:

> Having suffered shipwreck, occasioned by storms, three times on three consecutive voyages, I naturally acquired an interest in the questions as to why storms happen on the Earth, and where they come from. . . .

He hit on an explanation that promised to solve the mystery. Then he found that it could explain more than storms:

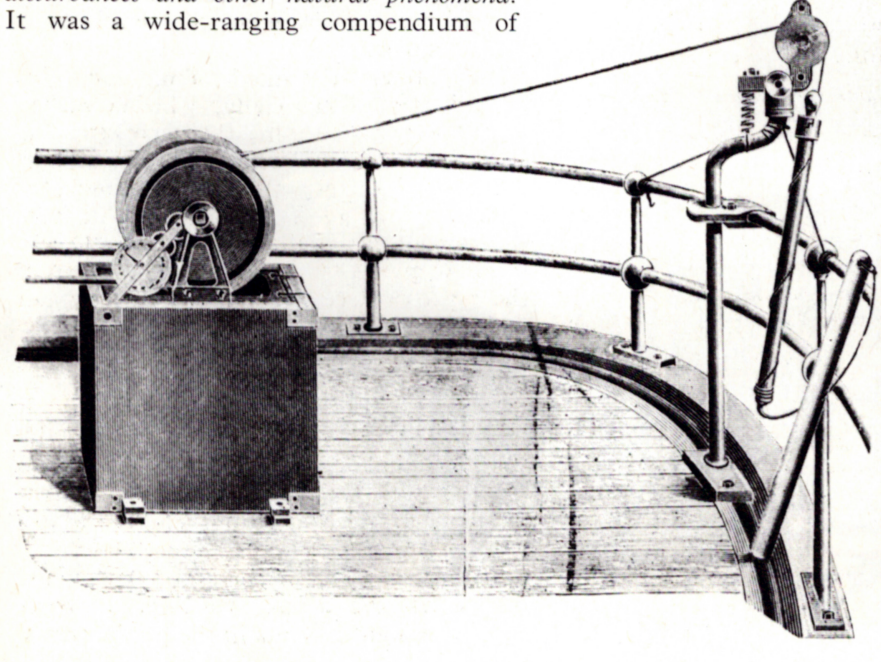
> On the west coast of South America I was frequently disappointed by the non-arrival of a calculated storm, until it became apparent that on these occasions an earthquake took the place of an absent storm.

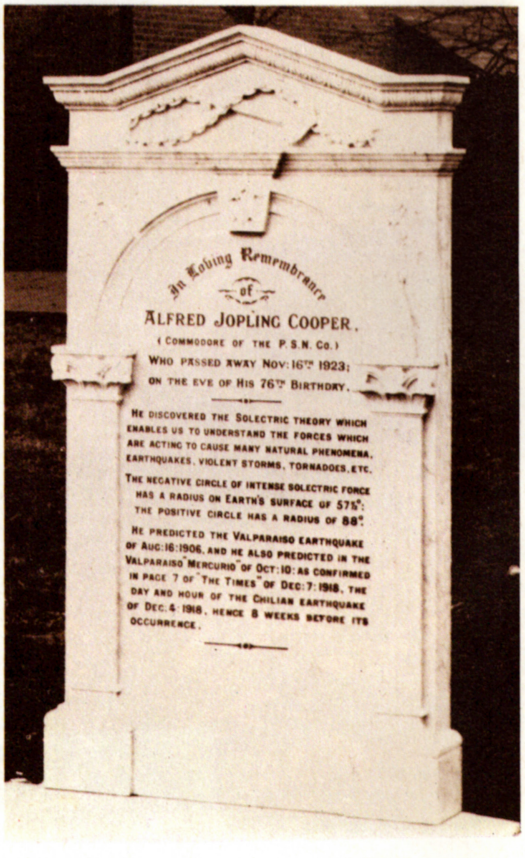
The full theory was expounded in the book he wrote in his retirement, entitled *Solectrics*, with the ambitious subtitle *A theory explaining the causes of tempests, seismic and volcanic disturbances and other natural phenomena.* It was a wide-ranging compendium of meteorological and seismological reports, astronomical charts and polemics against adversaries. The theory was guaranteed to provoke the scorn of every scientist who encountered it – and yet it earned the approbation of numerous practical seamen.

Captain Cooper believed in the existence of a 'solectric' ('solar electric') force, streaming between the Sun, Moon, Earth and all the other planets and satellites of the solar system. This force, he believed, was constantly entering the Earth and accumulating in various regions precisely determined by the positions of the heavenly bodies. When those positions were unfavourable, solectric force would accumulate in great strength at certain places. It would strive to break loose, especially from the peaks of hills and mountains. If it did so, some disaster was likely to occur. If the moment passed without such a catastrophe, however, that region was safe until the heavenly bodies should again group themselves into some ill-omened pattern. The times at which a particular place was threatened could be precisely calculated, though it was a laborious task.

It did not take Captain Cooper long to convince himself of the truth of his new theory. News of it spread among his fellow officers in the Merchant Marine, and he himself published some pamphlets describing it.

On 2 August 1906 Captain Cooper, in charge of the *Oriana*, anchored in Valparaiso Bay. He was greeted by two Chilean officers who were interested in his theory. They told him that with its aid they had predicted a





Above: Captain Alfred Jopling Cooper, inventor of the theory of solectrics, which – as the inscription on his gravestone (left) explains – 'enables us to understand the forces which are acting to cause many natural phenomena, earthquakes, violent storms, tornadoes, etc.' A practical seaman, Cooper turned his capable mind to many inventions – such as this depth sounder (far left) – then pondered a method for predicting storms. He found that the theory he came up with – solectrics – could do more, however: it could also predict earthquakes. The full theory was put forward in a slim but ambitious volume, *Solectrics* (right), which he wrote in his retirement

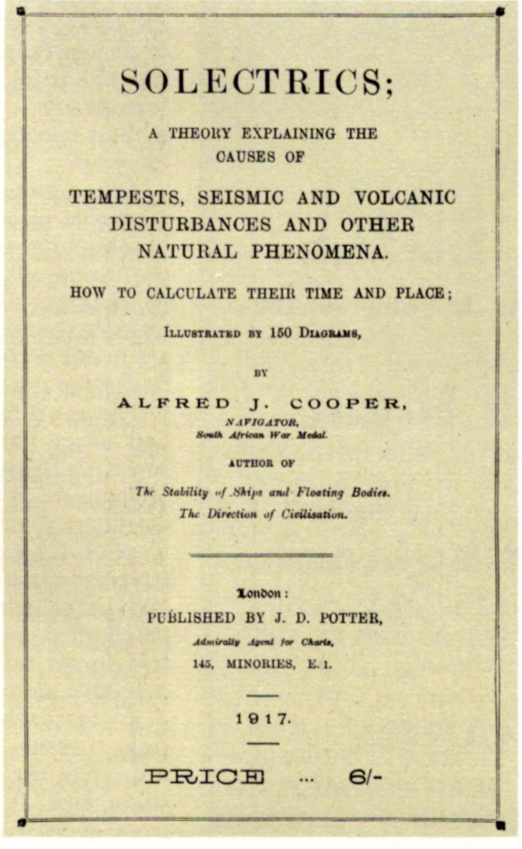
severe storm two weeks hence; but Cooper calculated that the situation would become worse than that – there would be a storm and an earthquake to boot. He urged them to warn the press and shipping – and that was how Valparaiso received its warning.

That year Captain Cooper retired, and began to work more energetically on his theories. Six years later he discovered that more misfortune was on its way to Valparaiso. He wrote to the British Consul in the city with predictions of unseasonable bad weather on three days during September – and of an earthquake on 29 September:

> I am sorry not to feel justified in predicting definitely, because I can but spell out the messages of the heavenly bodies, and am unable yet to read them at sight. In this case we have various powerful combinations and I am anxious to know their effects, if any.
>
> Personally, if I were in Valparaiso during the night of September 29th I should be on the alert for signs of Earth unrest and displays of natural forces. . . .

In his comments on the accompanying astronomical charts he was more emphatic: for 29 September, he wrote:

> Volcanic action is indicated. Earthquakes and storm are probable. Between the hours of 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. on September 30th caution is necessary and a study of the weather. If animals are uneasy and rain sets in, walk outside between 2 and 5 a.m., after that there is safety.



SOLECTRICS;

A THEORY EXPLAINING THE CAUSES OF

TEMPESTS, SEISMIC AND VOLCANIC DISTURBANCES AND OTHER NATURAL PHENOMENA.

HOW TO CALCULATE THEIR TIME AND PLACE;

ILLUSTRATED BY 150 DIAGRAMS,

BY

ALFRED J. COOPER,

NAVIGATOR,
South African War Medal.

AUTHOR OF

The Stability of Ships and Floating Bodies.
The Direction of Civilisation.

London:
PUBLISHED BY J. D. POTTER,
Admiralty Agent for Charts,
145, MINORIES, E.1.

1917.

PRICE ... 6/-

The Consul thought it his duty to publish this letter. Speculation and alarm mounted in Valparaiso as a result. The Director of the Seismological Office was moved to write a crushing rejoinder to the presumptuous seaman. He could not attack the theory directly for, as he himself admitted, he did not understand the calculations involved. He therefore made do instead with describing the inglorious history of seismic prophecies, named some adherents of Captain Cooper who had abandoned his theories, and finally dwelt on his own refutation of a completely different theory linking earthquakes directly to the phases of the Moon. He ended:

> As for me, I shall be very calm on the 18th and 30th of September, thinking that only God knows whether an earthquake threatens or not, and I declare myself to be totally ignorant in this regard. Even should Captain Cooper's prophecy come to pass I would not believe his theory. I am in good company – the company of all seismologists.

Captain Cooper, however, would have regarded that as singularly poor company to be keeping. And such reproofs from the learned only deepened his lifelong scorn for official experts and 'pretentious professors'.

The warning finger

As each date for which Captain Cooper had made predictions came and went, his meteorological predictions were confirmed: the weather was the worst in living memory for the southern springtime. The inhabitants of towns in the area at which he had pointed his warning finger became increasingly agitated.

> At the instance, no doubt, of the non-intelligent section of authority, the President of Chile cabled to the Foreign Office in London, and I was twice hunted up by police – so that I might use means to turn off the predicted earthquake!

Many citizens remained calm. These included traders especially, who published advertisements advising their customers to stock up in preparation for the coming disaster. In Valparaiso the Hotel Monte Mar announced in an English-language advertisement that it would remain open all night to allow guests to watch the destruction of the city to the accompaniment of a hot supper and the sounds of an orchestra. British residents dissociated themselves from such tasteless levity.

During September Captain Cooper became 'the best abused man in the world, certainly the most grossly misunderstood man in Chile'. By the night of 29 September the town-dwellers of central Chile had been 'reduced to a state approaching panic', according to *The Times*'s correspondent. Many people left the towns, while many others spent the night in tents in the public parks;

one such was the President himself, in Santiago. Military bands played to soothe the anxious citizens.

In Valparaiso at 2 a.m. rain began to fall and a low moan escaped from the crowd. The downpour lasted all through the night. But there was no earthquake. Almost on the stroke of 5 a.m. the crowds, as if reprieved, hurried for their homes.

But during that night there were more than a dozen tremors in the surrounding areas – a record. And a strong earthquake took place beneath the ocean, throwing up three new islands.

Some Chileans were incensed at Captain Cooper; many more were inclined to give him credit for the success of his predictions of the unprecedentedly bad weather. Captain Cooper regarded himself as fully vindicated and pressed on with his work.

The outbreak of the First World War afforded him fresh subject matter. In the early days of the war he wrote to the Admiralty with the advice that special precautions should be taken against a storm threatening in the North Sea towards the end of September. For some reason this prompted the attentions of the Special Branch, and Captain Cooper found a pair of plain-clothes detectives looking around his garden one day, searching for a secret radio transmitter; they were most interested in his exposition of the solectric theory. On 30 September 1914 'the heaviest gale in living memory' swept over the North Sea.

Right: Alfred Cooper Rollinson, Captain Cooper's great-nephew, who has, since his great-uncle's death in 1923, continued to test the theory of solectrics by analysing planetary positions at the time of earthquakes. Aware that a modern computer would make his work much easier and quicker, he approached *The Unexplained* – which agreed to run computer tests of the theory's predictions

Below: an advertisement from *El Mercurio* of September 1912. Captain Cooper had predicted an earthquake for 30 September – and the Monte Mar Hotel was quick to take advantage of the prophecy. In the event, however, only slight tremors were felt

TERREMOTO, DESTRUCTION and BURNING OF **VALPARAISO**

September 30th 1912.

The best position from which to witness this great event is

MONTE MAR HOTEL

Which offers unusual facilities to the public for this occasion.

The establishment will

Remain Open all Night

And an excellent hot supper will be served shortly before the critical time. An orchestra will enliven the solemn hours and a Doctor will be in attendance, as also a section of

The Red Cross Ambulance.

The upsetting of the Surrounding Hills and Crashing of the Rocky Coast, and the retiring of the sea with its subsequent inrush will make a most interesting sight for which we make.

NO EXTRA CHARGE

THE MANAGEMENT.

The Captain discovered that his theory could explain more and more phenomena. Exploding warships, for instance: the pages of *Solectrics* are replete with cases of ill-fated ships that he showed – after the fact, unfortunately – to have been at the focus of malign solectric activity at the moment they blew up.

But among these cases there is a remarkable piece of detective work not attributable to hindsight. On 30 December 1915 the armoured cruiser *Natal* blew up and sank in harbour. Captain Cooper resolved to determine the cause 'because the idea of treachery in our midst begets nervous anxiety and a desire for cruel reprisal'.

It was a difficult problem, for the position and exact time of the disaster were kept secret. A British warship could have been in any one of countless harbours around the world at that time. After two days' work Captain Cooper decided that the ship must have been in a Scottish port, Cromarty Bay, and he calculated two times at which astronomical combinations gave rise to solectric forces sufficient to cause gases from defective ammunition to explode.

In 1917, when he published these conclusions in the second edition of his book *Solectrics*, the facts of the *Natal*'s loss were still secret. It was only later that he heard from eye-witnesses that the explosion had

indeed occurred in Cromarty Bay. The time of the explosion, however, was *between* the two times that he had predicted. Nevertheless, to locate the place was an impressive feat.

Explosions in mines, explosions in ammunition dumps – Captain Cooper scrutinised all these, and time and again found a solectric cause for them. He analysed heat waves and cold spells – the interactions of the celestial bodies were found to be responsible. And 'brain storms' were explained as easily as atmospheric storms: a number of riots in lunatic asylums were analysed solectrically, with the usual success.

On 10 October 1918 Captain Cooper sent another of his doleful predictions to Chile. He stated that on 3 December, from about midday until about an hour past midnight, there would be signs of natural disturbance: bad weather, perhaps volcanic tremors. The centre of the astronomical 'combination' would be near Valparaiso. He asked that a 'slight warning' be published.

The letter was delayed; it reached *El Mercurio* of Valparaiso in the evening of 3 December. The tremors were slightly late, too – striking at 3.15 and 7.40 the following morning. The shocks were not severe in Valparaiso, but the city of Copiapó was completely destroyed by a shock at 7.50 a.m. So, too, was the town of Vallenar. *El Mercurio* was impressed by the nearly simultaneous arrivals of the prophecy and its fulfilment, and Captain Cooper's reputation was confirmed among the Chilean people.

In England, Captain Cooper's young great-nephew, Alfred Cooper Rollinson, waited expectantly for newspaper reports of events in Chile on 3 and 4 December. When they finally came, he turned to his father and told him triumphantly: 'There is uncle's earthquake!'

Young Alfred was among the mourners at his great-uncle's grave five years later. All his life he was to be fascinated by the intricate calculations and grandiose sweep of Captain Cooper's theory. When major earthquakes occurred he would try his hand at drawing diagrams for them in the manner expounded by Captain Cooper in his book. After his retirement from a lifetime's career in banking he was able to give more time to the theory. He tried to attract the attention of the scientific world. He pestered scientists; he wrote to the American President's Chief Scientific Adviser; and the British Astrological Association showed a considerable – if critical – interest in Captain Cooper's work.

But the time required for a definitive test of the theory was not available to Mr Cooper Rollinson. Labouring over the large charts, covering them with the same tidy copperplate script with which he had once filled bank ledgers, he was painfully aware that it would take him years to do what a modern computer could do in days.

Top: the armoured cruiser *Natal*, which blew up on 30 December 1915. Captain Cooper determined to find out the cause – 'because the idea of treachery in our midst begets nervous anxiety and a desire for cruel reprisal'. Within two days his solectric theory had revealed the site of the explosion, which had been kept secret by the government: the remote Cromarty Bay on the Moray Firth in the north of Scotland (above). He was less accurate about the time of the explosion, however: his theory yielded a choice of two times – and the true time, as later revealed, was *between* them

One day he wrote to the recently launched *The Unexplained*, which had announced that it was interested in prophecies and premonitions of all kinds. One of the publication's advisers, Professor Archie Roy of the University of Glasgow, was contacted; and through his good offices one of his colleagues in the Department of Astronomy, Dr Ian Walker, agreed to put a computer to work analysing the theory and disgorging enough predictions – as opposed to retrospective analyses of past events – to settle once and for all the question of the value of solectrics. Once again the scientific world was paying attention to the ideas of Captain Cooper.

On page 2666: how the solectric theory fares under computer analysis

Life before life?

When some people are hypnotised they can, apparently, easily recall past lives – often in surprisingly vivid detail. But what if they never lived those lives – where did they discover such a wealth of material? MELVIN HARRIS examines some classic cases

THE BRIDEY MURPHY case of 1952 can now be seen as a landmark in reincarnation research. Bridey was supposedly an Irish woman who lived in the early 19th century and whose life was 'recalled' under hypnosis by a 29-year-old American woman, Virginia Tighe (see page 79). The case captured people's imaginations and raised hopes at a time when traditional faiths were being questioned in Europe and the United States. And, since it involved an exciting use of the newly available domestic tape recorder, it seemed to point the way for anyone who wanted to study regression. Some of the emulators found it relatively easy to find subjects who could regress to what seemed to be previous existences.

A few hypnotists were bewildered, though, to find that the same subjects could, apparently, be *advanced* to old age or even to future existences. Were these nothing but subconscious fantasies provided to please the hypnotists? And if so, was the same true of the ostensible *past* existences? Were they simply a *mélange* of buried memories, made gripping by the sincerity that accompanies cryptomnesia?

In 1956 Dr Edwin S. Zolik of Marquette University in the United States set out to answer these questions. He designed a two-part experiment involving an undergraduate volunteer whom he called 'Jamie O'Toole'. In the first session Jamie was regressed in stages from his first day in high school to his third birthday. Jamie was then instructed: 'Go back slowly to the time before you were Jamie O'Toole, and tell . . ., if you can, who you were and what you did before you became Jamie O'Toole.' In a short while Jamie announced that he was Brian O'Malley, born in the year 1850. He lived in County Cork and was an officer in Her Majesty's Irish Guards. He was unmarried, but had a mistress – in fact 'many different ones, but only one at a time . . . pretty . . . pretty girls, French and Irish girls.' His life had ended at the age of 42, when he fell from his horse while jumping hurdles.

The second session was held a few days later, but this time hypnosis was induced without any attempt at regression. Instead the subject was asked 'Do you know who Brian O'Malley is?' After a brief period of confusion Jamie recounted all the essential details of his previous session. He was then asked where the name Brian O'Malley came from. At first he claimed not to know, so he was asked if it was part of a story he had read or part of a film he had seen – but he still could not recall the origin. Zolik's next move was to ask whether the story might have been told by Jamie's parents.

This led to a swift reply: 'Yes, yes . . . yes, my grandfather – from my grandfather.' The simple question 'Can you tell me the story?' produced the enlightening reply:

> . . . not Brian. His name is Timothy O'Malley . . . Timothy O'Malley was an English soldier . . . I remember now. He and my grandfather fought. O'Malley was an Irishman. Grandfather and O'Malley fought. O'Malley was killed – he was killed in an accident with a horse later . . . Yes, grandfather

Virginia Tighe, one of the most sensational of hypnotic regression subjects, as she was at the age of seven (far right): she 'returned' to her infancy in her first hypnotic sessions, conducted when she was a young woman in her twenties (right). Then she went on to 'recall' a previous life as Bridey Murphy, an Irish girl of the 19th century. But it was later claimed by critics that the incidents of Bridey's life suspiciously resembled details of Virginia's own childhood

Under hypnosis, a 15-year-old schoolgirl described how she had once been a young boy who had wanted to become a fish to swim out into Lake Issykjokul (below). The boy, imagining that he *was* a fish, jumped in – but drowned. It later turned out that the subject had once read a novel containing a very similar incident

> fought and hurt him . . . I think O'Malley was responsible for my grandfather being run out of Ireland . . . Grandfather hated him – *hated him.*

Here Jamie O'Toole dried up, perhaps overcome by emotion, but after a short while the session resumed and he was asked if the grandfather had mentioned O'Malley's mistress. He replied: 'Grandfather said O'Malley was a blackguard' – far from a definite answer, and vague enough to cover the category of a loose-living womaniser. Further questions revealed that Jamie had heard these tales while living on his grandfather's farm. He was about seven years old then.

In later answers he stated that he had liked stories about the army. He said:

> I wanted to grow up and be a soldier – grandfather had been a soldier . . . he never liked me . . . he was not really my grandfather . . . I wanted to please him . . . he said I had bad blood in me . . . Mom cried – Dad told grandfather he could not say that – big argument – I just wanted to go.

At this point Jamie was so moved that he began to sob softly; Zolik waited until it seemed proper to continue and then probed to find out why a small boy would be thought of as a villain. Jamie then said:

> Grandfather was mad . . . I didn't hurt the mare . . . he told me not to ride her . . . I took her out . . . she was very high-spirited and I let her have her head . . . she was not hurt, just enjoyed being out . . . He was very mad and bawled me out . . . After that I wanted to please grandfather so that he would like me, but never felt that he did. . . .

Since Jamie O'Toole was evidently disturbed by recalling this unhappy time, Zolik decided to end the session. But he was fully satisfied that the answers had provided enough data for a valid analysis of the case. In his view Jamie had identified with the 'blackguard' O'Malley because both of them were in conflict with the grandfather, and Jamie, after all, had 'black blood' too.

Another important reason for this identification lay in the experience with the horse – a horse had been responsible for O'Malley's death and for Jamie's 'psychological annihilation by his grandfather'. In brief, Zolik's detailed analysis showed that past-life memories could easily be nothing more than a mixture of remembered tales and emotionally coloured symbolic events.

Zolik's method of probing for the real-life origins of 'reincarnationist' material was

An unnamed 19-year-old student claimed that she had once lived in the ancient city of Babylon (below). She also gave a vivid account of contemporary life in 13th-century England (above), and of her life in revolutionary Russia (above right)

something he recommended to anyone seriously interested in reaching the truth. Unfortunately few, if any, of the enthusiastic hypno-regressionists took any notice of his advice, and session after session was committed to tape and marvelled over without any effort being made to verify the origins or meaning of this material. The hypnotherapist Arnall Bloxham, for one, recorded over 400 'past-life' regressions without even once digging for the possibly mundane origins of these alleged lives.

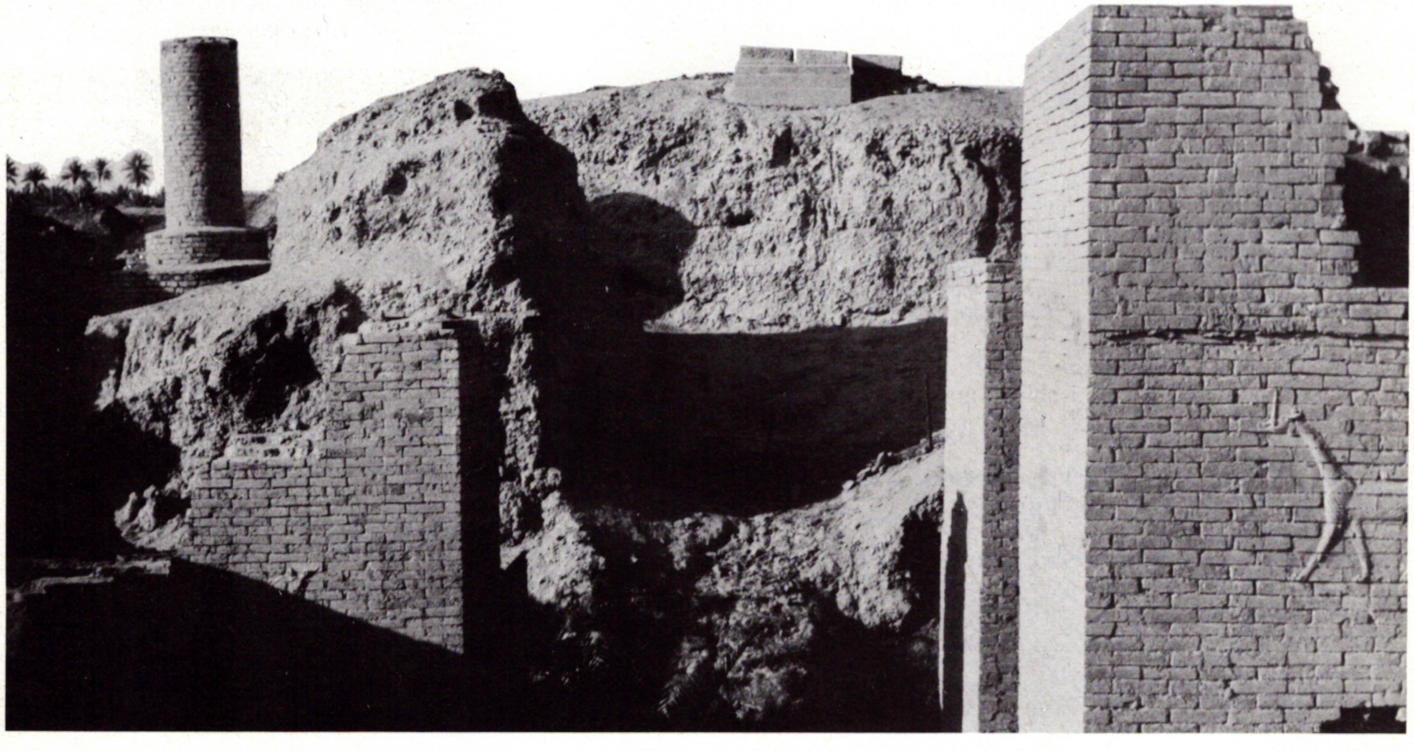
The Finnish psychiatrist Dr Reima Kampman, by contrast, has devoted years to the systematic investigation of the cryptomnesic origins of 'past-life' accounts. He began his work in the 1960s in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oulu. He found his subjects among large groups of volunteers drawn from the highest grades of the secondary schools in Oulu. All those who could enter a deep hypnotic state were selected for closer study. Kampman found it relatively easy to induce 'past-life' recall as a response to his instruction: 'Go back to an age before your birth, when you are somebody else, somewhere else.'

In one case, a 15-year-old girl spoke of a previous life in 1780. She was then known as Malina Bostojevski. She lived during a time of war and spoke about the disasters caused by the conflict. She also gave an accurate account of people's attitudes and living conditions in those times. Subsequent regressions brought a further five different personalities to light.

Seven years later, the same girl produced a completely different batch of previous lives. The most striking of this new group involved her past life as a seven-year-old boy who lived at the foot of a huge mountain. His father was the captain of a boat that sailed on Lake Issykjokul. The father's name was given as Aitmatov.

This boy led a lonely life, seeing little of his father, though yearning to be with him. And his bleak life reached a grim end when he grew to envy the fish that swam so freely in the river: he longed to become one and to swim to the lake to rejoin his father. In a wild fantasy he felt that he really was a fish, leapt into the lake and was drowned.

When not under hypnosis the girl had no memory of the boy, the lake or the father, so a further session was arranged. This time she was asked to remember where she had first heard the tale of the sad little boy. At once the girl brought out the name of a novel, *Valkoinen laiva* ('The white ship'). An examination of the book showed that it was set



around Lake Issykjokul; it involved the life and death by drowning of a forlorn little boy; and the name of the author was, in fact, Aitmatov!

Perhaps even more amazing were the eight 'past lives' conjured up by a 19-year-old student. In one life she lived in ancient Babylonia; her next life began in the Chinese city of Nanking; then she moved on to Norway, before re-emerging in Norwich in England. After that followed a life in Paris, another in England and a final existence in revolutionary Russia. Her 13th-century English life – as Dorothy, an inn-keeper's daughter – brought to light 'a very explicit account of contemporary happenings.' And she astonished everyone by singing a song that none of the listeners was familiar with; she called it 'the summer song'. The language used in the song was later studied by a student 'with high honours in the English language'. He had no difficulty in identifying the words as examples of an old form of English – possibly Middle English. But this meant nothing to the girl, who had no memory of ever having heard the words or the music of the song before.

The solution to this riddle came during a later experiment. The girl was asked to go back to a time when she might have seen the words and music of the song, or even heard it sung. She then regressed to the age of 13 and remembered taking a book from the shelves of a library. It was a casual choice and she merely flicked through the pages. Yet she not only remembered its title but was able to state just where in the book her 'summer song' could be found. The book was '*Musiikin vaiheet*', a Finnish translation of *The history of music* written by Benjamin Britten and Imogen Holst. And the mystery music was, of all things, the famous round *Sumer is icumen in*, with the words rendered in a simplified medieval English.

Another of the girl's 'previous lives' gave up its secret origins under hypnosis. In this 'life' she had been Karin Bergström, a seven-year-old girl who had died in an air raid in 1939. She was able to supply an address for her old home and she knew the names and occupations of her former parents. Enquiries showed that there had indeed been an air raid on the date she had given. Moreover, the address she had given had, indeed, been hit. But the population records showed that no real Karin Bergström, nor any relatives of such a person, had died in the raid.

So the girl was asked to regress to the time when she had first heard of the Bergströms or the bombing. She soon remembered herself as a little girl, turning over the pages of a patriotic book. In it there were photographs of streets and houses hit by bombs and something about the people made homeless. The exact date of the raid was given, and one picture showed two of the victims killed that day – significantly, a mother and her seven-year-old daughter. Thus the complete 'past life' memory had been assembled from nothing more than the disjointed material found in this one book, seen when she was a very young child.

A spate of similar successes led Kampman to conclude that he had demonstrated:

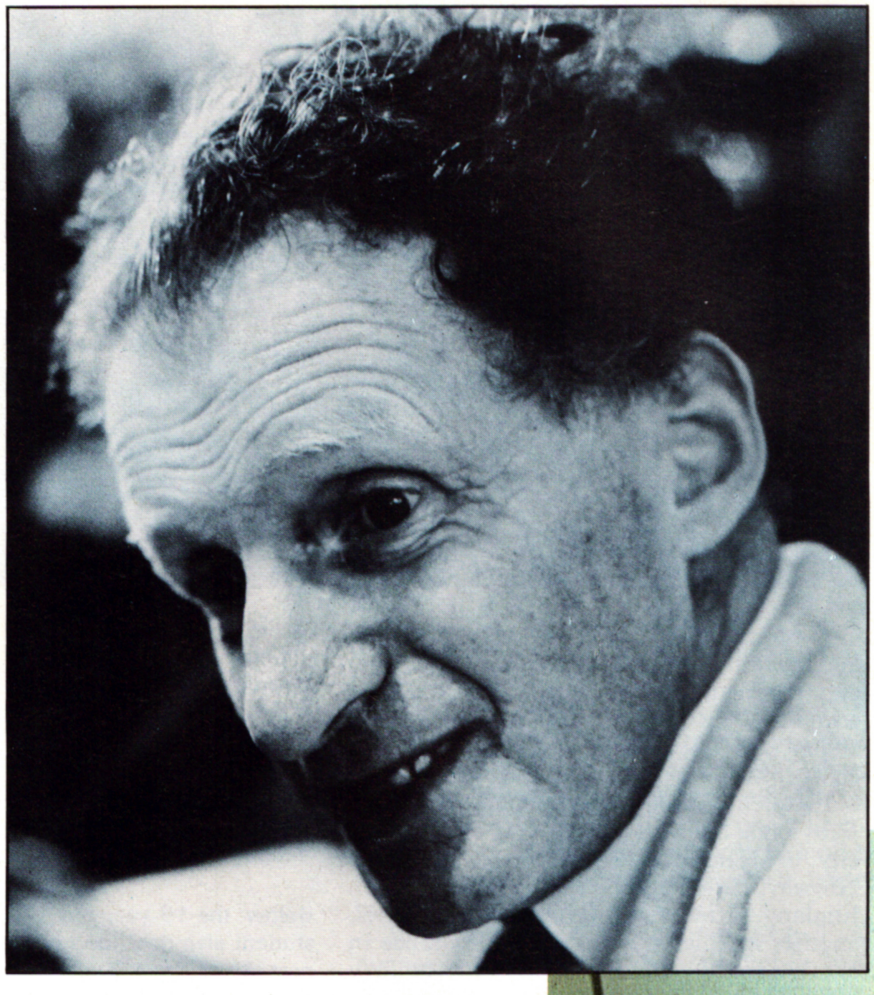
> that the experiences of the present personality were reflected in the secondary personalities, both in the form of realistic details and as emotional experiences. The recording of a song from a book simply by turning over the leaves of the book at the age of 13 is an outstanding example of how very detailed information can be stored in our brain without any idea whatever of it in the conscious mind, and how it can be retrieved in deep hypnosis.

On page 2698: are the Bloxham tapes serious evidence for reincarnation?

Below: the 19-year-old student also described her past life as Karin Bergström, who died when only seven years old, in 1939, in an air raid in the Russian–Finnish conflict. Contemporary records show that the house that she claimed she had died in had indeed been hit in an air raid at that time

Croiset: double Dutch?

Gerard Croiset, the famous Dutch 'psychic detective', is widely believed to have performed near-miracles in identifying murderers and finding their victims. But, as PIET HEIN HOEBENS discovered, hardly any of Croiset's cases will bear close scrutiny



IF INTERNATIONAL celebrity is a measure of greatness, Gerard Croiset (see page 488) must rank with the greatest Dutchmen in history. His fame may equal that of Rembrandt, Van Gogh and the boy who saved the land by putting his finger in the dyke. He was called, among other things, 'the miracle man of Holland', 'the Dutchman with the X-ray brain', 'the Mozart among the psychics' and 'the clairvoyant who never disappointed'.

When Gerard Croiset died on 20 July 1980, aged 71, obituary writers both in Holland and abroad recalled the psychic's astonishing achievements. He had, they said, by paranormal means located hundreds of missing persons, dead and alive. He had served as an occult Sherlock Holmes to the Watsons of the Dutch police by solving dozens of baffling crimes. In sharp contrast to virtually all other 'psychic detectives' he had allowed scientists to monitor his work. He had scored incredible hits in numerous tightly controlled ESP experiments. Two of the most distinguished parapsychologists in Europe, Professor Wilhelm Tenhaeff of Utrecht State University and Professor Hans Bender of Freiburg in West Germany, had vouched for the authenticity of his mediumship.

In Britain, Gerard Croiset was best known for his work as a paranormal crime-buster and finder of missing persons. His attempts to help find the Yorkshire Ripper were widely publicised.

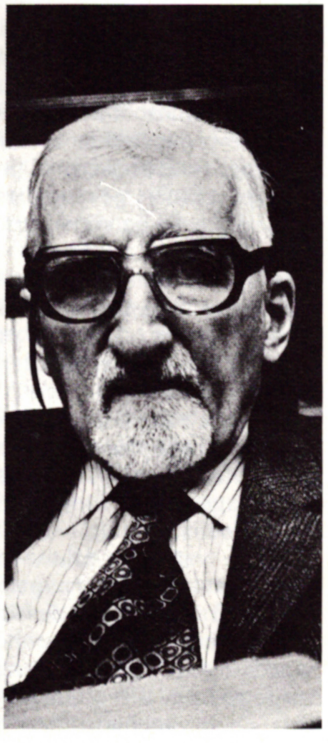
Late in 1979 *Sun* reporter Derek Shuff went to Utrecht to consult the 'miracle man'. On Monday 26 November the paper announced that Croiset had 'offered vital new information'. He had 'seen' that the elusive mass murderer lived right in the centre of Sunderland. He reportedly told Mr Shuff that he was 'confident' that his vision had been essentially correct. Perhaps an innocent man is presently serving a life sentence in connection with the Yorkshire murders. If not, Croiset was absolutely wrong. It is, to put it mildly, curious that the psychic had basically done nothing except confirm what was widely – and erroneously – believed at the time: that the Ripper lived in the Sunderland area. Croiset was a master in the stock-in-trade technique of the 'prophet': collect information by normal means and feed it back as 'telepathic impressions'.

The most curious part of Derek Shuff's story is where he writes: 'His [Croiset's] most famous case was to describe the killer of a young Dutch girl who was found dead beside her bicycle.' For some reason, this 'famous case' seems to have completely escaped the notice of the Dutch police and the Dutch press. Certainly there had once been a case involving a girl and a bicycle – in Wierden, in 1946. However, the girl was not dead and the chief of the Wierden police has personally debunked some sensationalist accounts in the Dutch press of Croiset's alleged success in helping solve the case. Of course, it would be unfair to judge Croiset on the basis of a tabloid article. We must take into account what purports to be the scientifically validated evidence of his unusual abilities.

Croiset's international reputation was largely based on the fact that Wilhelm Tenhaeff – the first professor of parapsychology in the history of western science – claimed to have examined closely and carefully documented the psychic's achievements for over a quarter of a century. Alas, Tenhaeff, who died in

Above: Croiset's Utrecht home. Although most of his cases were Dutch, as his fame spread, so did the area of his operations as psychic sleuth; at least two of his cases took place in Britain

Left: Gerard Croiset, the most famous 'paragnost' – or psychic detective – who died in 1980, aged 71. He owed his fame largely to being hailed as a psychic wonder by Professor Wilhelm Tenhaeff of Utrecht University in Holland (below right) and by Professor Hans Bender of the Freiburg Institute in West Germany (below, with Croiset). In test after test they claimed direct 'hits' for Croiset's powers of ESP – but were they, as author Piet Hein Hoebens argues, desperately turning 'misses' into 'hits'?



1981, was not the cautious, dispassionate and honest scholar his many admirers believed him to be. He was an extremely sloppy investigator who not infrequently indulged in outright manipulation of the data.

For example: at the first International Conference on Parapsychological Studies, sponsored by Eileen Garrett's Parapsychology Foundation, in Utrecht in 1953, Tenhaeff presented a paper on his work with psychic detectives. One of his prize cases concerned an attempt on the life of a Dutch policeman; Croiset had astounded the investigating judge by paranormally 'seeing', in specific detail, a metal worker who had been 'in some way involved in the attack'. In the context of a project on psychic detectives started by Professor Marcello Truzzi's Michigan-based Center for Scientific Anomalies Research (CSAR) I myself have attempted to verify this claim. I discovered that all the specific details Croiset had 'paranormally' perceived had been published in the national newspapers five days *before* the seance where the investigating judge supposedly was 'astounded'. At the 1953 conference, Tenhaeff also forgot to tell his colleagues that the suspect indicated by Croiset had soon proved to be entirely innocent.

Unbelievable – and untrue?

In 1955, Croiset scored a curious, if ambiguous, success in helping to find a lost set of research papers belonging to a Dutch schools inspector and part-time parapsychologist, J. G. van Busschbach. Van Busschbach wrote an account of the incident, which was accepted for publication in the Dutch *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie* ('Journal of Parapsychology'). When Van Busschbach received the galley proofs he was amazed to find that the editor – Tenhaeff – had 'embellished' the case: so much so that the 'misses' had been changed into perfect 'hits'. For example, Croiset had said the documents would be found on a 'three-legged table' in an office that he described in detail. The papers were, in fact, found on an ordinary – four-legged – table in an office bearing only a vague resemblance to that described by Croiset. Angrily, Van Busschbach withdrew his article. This did not prevent Tenhaeff from later regaling American journalist Jack Harrison Pollack with the doctored version, which appears in Pollack's biography *Croiset the clairvoyant* (1964). This book, subtitled *Unbelievable but true!*, abounds with errors, distortions and misrepresentations. It was written under the supervision of Tenhaeff, who checked the manuscript and subsequently repeatedly endorsed *Croiset the clairvoyant* as a valuable contribution to the parapsychological literature.

At the 1953 Utrecht conference, Tenhaeff also claimed that Croiset had provided vital information concerning a coffee-smuggling

The Psychic Detectives: Day One o

IS THIS WHE

RIPPER

The town where a killer

● WORLD-FAMOUS psychic detective Gerard Croiset has offered vital new information in the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper.

● Using his psychic powers, he has built up a picture of the killer of 12 women. And he has passed his information to the Yorkshire police.

● He has given them a detailed description of the man they are looking for — a man with a squashed nose and a limp.

● And he has told police that the Ripper lives in the heart of Sunderland.

● Detective Superintendent John Slater says: "We are looking into this information very closely."

By DEREK SHUFF

Victims . . . six of the women killed by the Ripper

Above: Croiset made British headlines when he was invited by *Sun* reporter Derek Shuff to use his psychic gifts to identify and track down the Yorkshire Ripper. He gave Shuff 'vital new information' – that the Ripper had a 'squashed nose and a limp', and that he lived 'in the heart of Sunderland'. Unless an innocent man – Peter Sutcliffe – was found guilty of the Ripper's crimes, Croiset had been utterly wrong in his 'impressions'

affair in the town of Enschede in 1953. According to the professor, Croiset had paranormally 'seen' particulars of this affair that were not known to the police but were later found to be correct. A striking hit? I discovered that some of the details 'unknown to the police' had been published in the Enschede newspapers, pictures and all, a fortnight before Croiset was even consulted.

In September 1980 Tenhaeff published in the West German magazine *Esotera* a report of what seemed a cast-iron case. The previous year, the professor wrote, Commander Eekhof of the Woudrichem police had consulted Croiset in connection with a mysterious outbreak of arson.

All attempts to find the perpetrator had been in vain. Could the psychic provide the vital clue? Eekhof initially refused to believe what Croiset told him, for the clairvoyant's description of the arsonist fitted only one man in the Woudrichem area: a quartermaster in the local police force. Later, however, the Commander saw himself compelled to admit that, once again, Croiset had been right. The quarter-master was the arsonist. In his account in *Esotera*, Tenhaeff cited a 'protocol checked and signed by Mr Eekhof'. When I showed the article to the Police Commander, he positively stated that it was a 'fairy tale' and that it contained 'outright falsehoods'. Fortunately, he had kept a tape-recording of the consultation with Croiset and could prove that Tenhaeff had fabricated the psychic's amazing 'hits'. The 'protocol checked and signed by Mr Eekhof' simply never existed. And when I telephoned Tenhaeff to ask him for an explanation he slammed the receiver down.

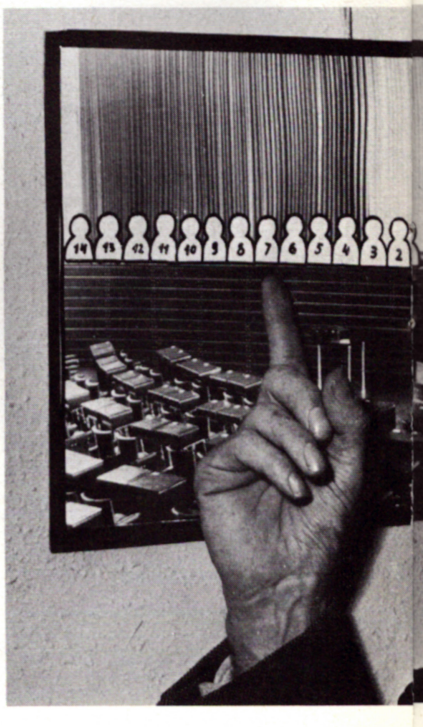
It is widely believed that Croiset was the psychic stand-by of the Dutch police. However, Dutch policemen have always been very sceptical of Croiset and other paranormal detectives. The above examples may suggest why this is so.

Apart from his activities as an occult policeman, Croiset's chief claim to fame was his alleged ability to demonstrate precognitive ESP in the so-called 'chair tests'. In such tests, the clairvoyant would try to describe a person who, at some specified time in the future, would happen to be sitting in a specified chair. This 'target person' would then be requested to comment on Croiset's statements. Hundreds of times, it is claimed, the psychic's precognitive 'impressions' turned out to be startlingly accurate.

The faith that fakes

But these experiments raised many questions. Usually, the only precaution against fraud was the experimenters' firm belief that Croiset would not cheat. The well-known and respected Dutch psychical researcher George Zorab has evidence that the 'Mozart among the clairvoyants' was not above taking advantage of this loophole now and then.

Croiset's typical 'readings' were sufficiently vague to allow for many possible interpretations. The experimenters (usually Tenhaeff and/or Professor Hans Bender) were wont to encourage the 'targets' to keep searching for a correspondence – *any* correspondence. Frequently, the recipients of this encouragement finally came up with



interpretations that hardly bore any resemblance to the original psychic statements.On one occasion, during the 1953 Pirmasens chair test – said by Bender to be one of the classics – Croiset had said: 'Does this lady live near a red building? In front of this building I see high columns. I also see a high flight of stairs. Is this lady often in this building? I have the impression that there is a hedge in front of the house. The building is somewhat decrepit.'

The 'target person' in fact denied *all* this. However, Tenhaeff and Bender hailed another striking hit for, next day, the woman told them that Croiset's description vaguely reminded her of the chapel in the graveyard at Pirmasens where she had had an emotional experience 11 years previously!

In 1981, I reproduced this classic experiment in Amsterdam. I gave my targets the complete set of statements Croiset had made for the 1953 Pirmasens test, pretending that these were fresh ones. Yet these results were even more striking than in the original experiment – the targets 'recognising' descriptions of themselves – which certainly confirms any suspicion that a typical 'hit' in the chair test was the result of subjective validation rather than genuine ESP.

The hot seat cools

Moreover, the Pirmasens woman who remembered the emotional experience in the graveyard chapel was *not* sitting in the chair for which Croiset had made his predictions. This is another problem with these experiments: 'displacement effects' were observed with amazing frequency. Sometimes, it was decided that Croiset had really 'seen' not the person in the target chair – but a relative of that person, or someone who would have been sitting there if he had not chosen another chair, or a whole *group* of people, or someone who had accidentally touched the target chair. Given the elastic rules of the chair tests, it would have been hard for Croiset not to be a success.

A final reason for not being impressed with the 'evidence' from the chair tests is the inadequacies of the published reports. In a couple of instances it has been possible to compare the published accounts with independent sources – and usually with the result that curious omissions and discrepancies have been discovered.

Tenhaeff repeatedly tried to impress the Dutch public with the astonishing results of the 1969 transatlantic chair test in which Croiset, in Utrecht, made the psychic statements, and Dr Jule Eisenbud, in Denver, Colorado, interrogated the targets. In several Dutch publications, Tenhaeff reported 'hits' that would seem to defy rational explanation. However, a comparison with Eisenbud's original account revealed that Tenhaeff had suppressed a number of 'misses' (while indicating that his report was exhaustive), that he had ignored some procedural errors that had largely invalidated the experiment and that he had invented a number of 'hits' that Croiset, in fact, had never scored. For example: Tenhaeff claimed that the target person, during the evening of the experiment, had worn green socks with a hole in one of them – exactly as Croiset, thousands of miles away, had paranormally 'seen'. But was this ESP? The truth is more prosaic: that particular evening, the target did *not* wear green socks with a hole in one of them.

Of course, it is impossible to disprove each and every one of Croiset's alleged psychic feats. The 'miracle man of Holland' may indeed have been a genuine clairvoyant – however I, and other investigators, have compelling reasons to urge extreme caution in accepting the 'evidence' presented for his achievements at face value.

To all appearances

Author Piet Hein Hoebens is well-known for his meticulous research into, and debunking of, Croiset's 'classic' cases. Undoubtedly many psychical researchers would not thank him for his findings, nor approve of his attitude that *all* psychics are frauds, as is obvious from his letter to *The Unexplained* on Croiset's involvement with the Pat McAdam case (see page 2001) – which, as Hoebens admits, appears to be one of Croiset's greatest successes. He said:

'A simpler, if costlier, scenario [than telephoning friends in Scotland for information] would have required Croiset (a very rich man) to dispatch his secretary (a well-travelled man) to Scotland . . . to a psychic it would have been a sound investment. A few hundred pounds is a bargain for a classic ESP hit.'

Left: Croiset uses a photograph of the West German Bundestag Plenary Hall to predict who will sit in which seats at the forthcoming election. He described one particular woman who would, he said, sit in a certain seat, wearing a black dress with something red on it. This was a direct 'hit'; the woman, dressed in black, wore a red rose. Moreover, she had been invited only at the last moment. Other 'chair tests' have, critics say, been 'fudged' to make misses into hits, such as those conducted by Dr Jule Eisenbud (above) in the United States, with Croiset projecting his psychic gifts across the Atlantic from his home in Holland

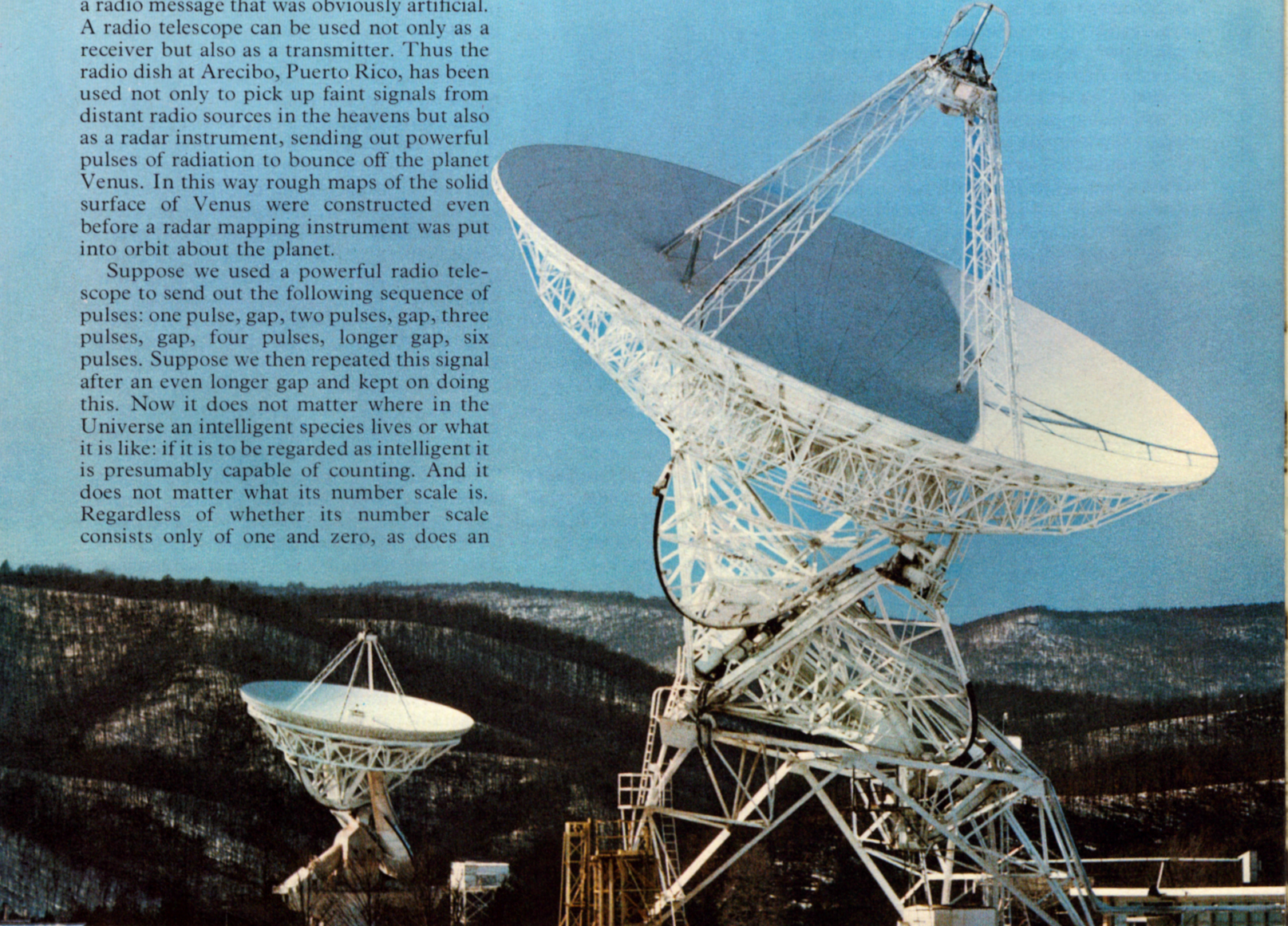
The keys to communicating with intelligent alien races in space will be the universal language of mathematics and the fundamental truths of physics and chemistry. ARCHIE ROY presents a primer of this interstellar Esperanto

A word in their ear

MANY PEOPLE HAVE SUPPOSED that even if signals that were obviously of artificial origin and therefore from intelligent beings were picked up by a radio telescope on Earth, it would be an impossible task ever to enter into communication with the alien species. How could it ever be possible to understand a language that no human being had ever spoken? There are even some languages on Earth, still surviving in inscriptions, that no one understands: ancient Minoan and Etruscan are examples. Nonetheless, it would be possible to solve the problem, using basic mathematical and scientific facts.

First let us consider how *we* would design a radio message that was obviously artificial. A radio telescope can be used not only as a receiver but also as a transmitter. Thus the radio dish at Arecibo, Puerto Rico, has been used not only to pick up faint signals from distant radio sources in the heavens but also as a radar instrument, sending out powerful pulses of radiation to bounce off the planet Venus. In this way rough maps of the solid surface of Venus were constructed even before a radar mapping instrument was put into orbit about the planet.

Suppose we used a powerful radio telescope to send out the following sequence of pulses: one pulse, gap, two pulses, gap, three pulses, gap, four pulses, longer gap, six pulses. Suppose we then repeated this signal after an even longer gap and kept on doing this. Now it does not matter where in the Universe an intelligent species lives or what it is like: if it is to be regarded as intelligent it is presumably capable of counting. And it does not matter what its number scale is. Regardless of whether its number scale consists only of one and zero, as does an



Left: hundreds of massed radio telescope dishes make up the proposed Cyclops system. Equivalent to a single huge instrument, the array would be enormously sensitive and capable of locating the direction of a radio source with high accuracy. Cyclops could perform the most thorough search yet for weak signals from intelligences in space. The first steps have been made with conventional radio telescopes, like these instruments (below left) at Green Bank, West Virginia, USA. Messages have also been sent into space – though there is no hope of receiving an answer for millennia

Right: this is the type of message we would send into space – and may one day receive. First we send an obviously artificial string of pulses (1). An obvious reply would be to repeat the sequence with the missing 5 inserted. Then we transmit simple sums (2, 3), thus demonstrating our symbols for 'plus', 'minus' and 'equals'. Then more compact symbols for the digits from 0 to 9 are introduced, using groups of pulses of several different strengths (4), and our way of combining them to represent numbers from 10 upwards is shown. Then some multiplication sums (5, 6) demonstrate the 'times' sign

electronic computer's, or contains 60 different numbers, like that of an ancient Babylonian, it will know that two is one more than one, that three is one more than two, and so on. It will realise that the signal it is picking up is simply the sequence of the first few numbers: one, two, three, four, . . ., six. It will recognise that this is an attempt to send out an obviously artificial signal, in the hope that if it is picked up by an intelligent race, it will send it back with the missing five inserted to show that the message has been understood. In order to ram home the artificiality of the message, it could be varied from time to time with other sequences of numbers, perhaps bearing some arithmetical relation to each other.

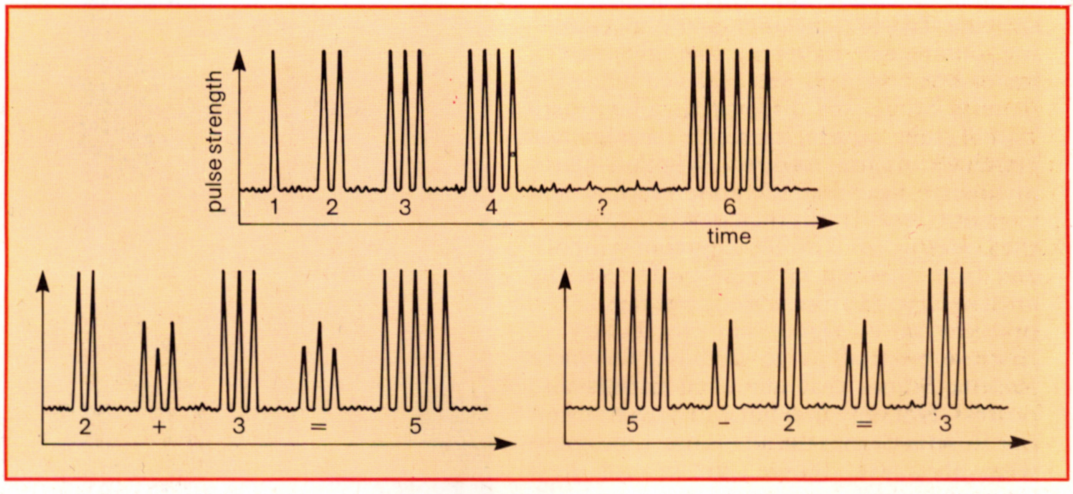
Let us suppose that an alien race has been contacted in this way and that they have replied, sending back the message with the missing set of pulses filled in, thus showing that they are interested in becoming 'pen pals'. Is there any future in such a dialogue?

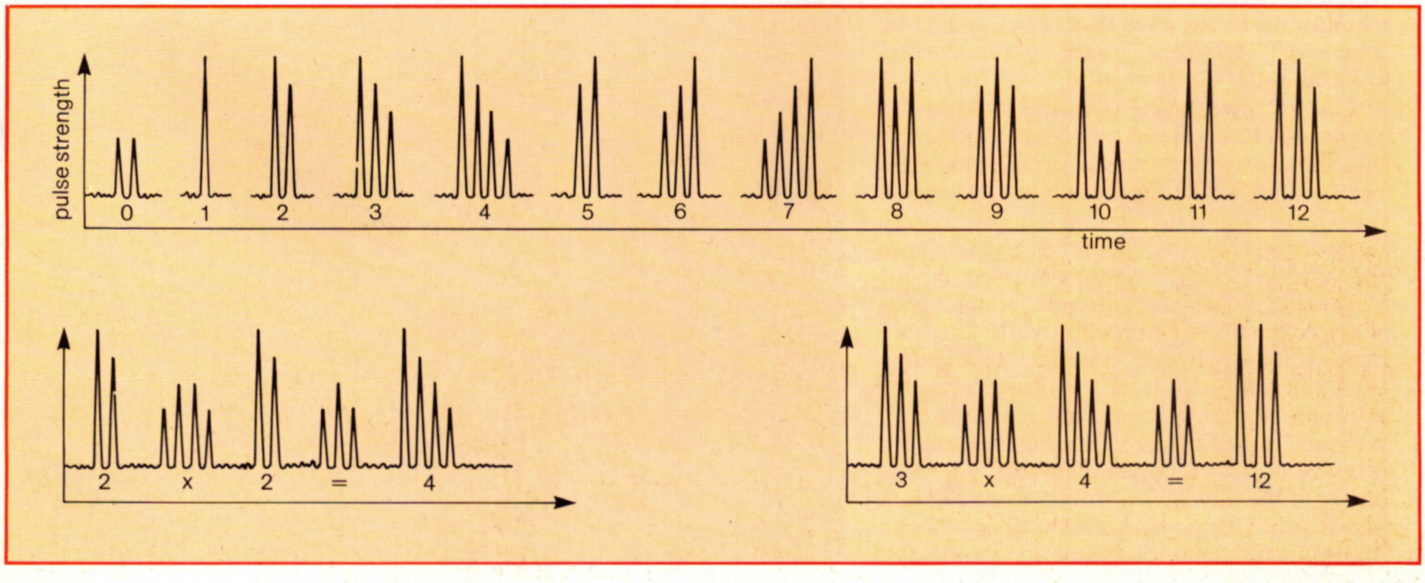
The problem is to establish a common vocabulary of radio signals and gradually to build up the number of 'words' until both races are proficient in the common 'language'. First steps would be the transmission of simple sums. It would not be long before they recognised the signal patterns that stood for addition, subtraction, equality and so on.

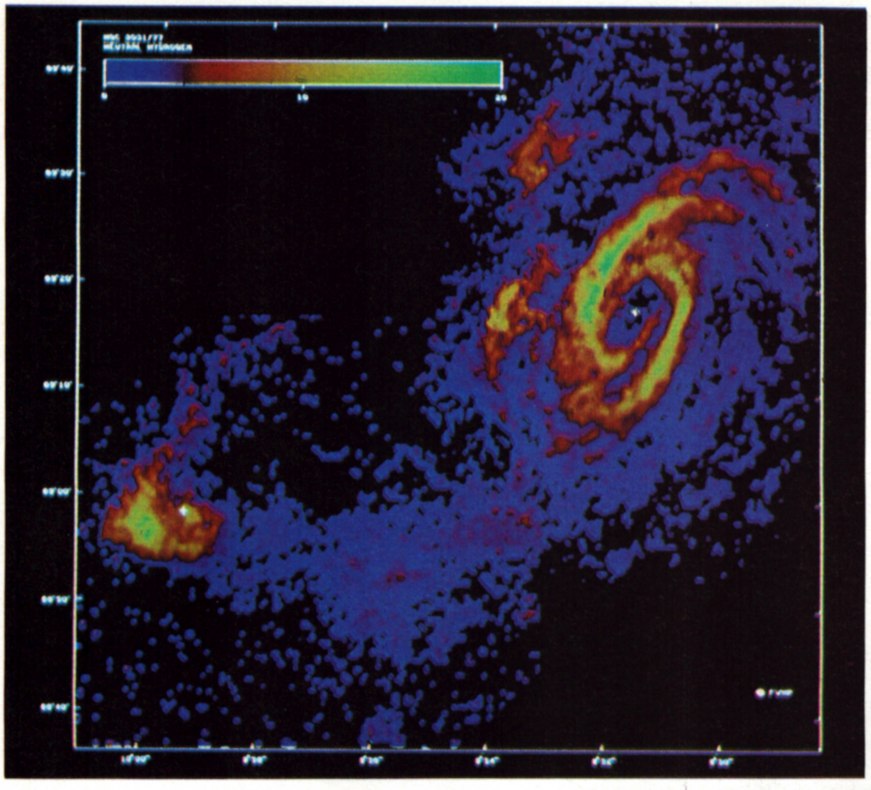
It would be impossibly cumbersome to continue to transmit numbers in the form of simple sequences of pulses, of course. But we could easily teach the aliens our way of writing numbers more compactly in the decimal, or ten-based, system. A sequence of, say, six pulses could be transmitted, followed by a more compact signal pattern; this would correspond to showing a child a sequence of six pencil strokes followed by the written digit 6 in the course of teaching him the digits 0 to 9. When the aliens had learned the ten digits we could send further sequences that would show how ten is represented as 10, eleven as 11, and so on.

We could then graduate to multiplications and divisions, sending such sums until the aliens realised that certain radio signals stood for the multiplication sign and the division sign. A little later we could make it clear what symbols we were using for the ideas 'is greater than' and 'is less than'. Proceeding in this way it is certain that an extensive set of mathematical symbols could be learned and used. It would be possible to make statements of considerable complexity.

It might be thought that little progress





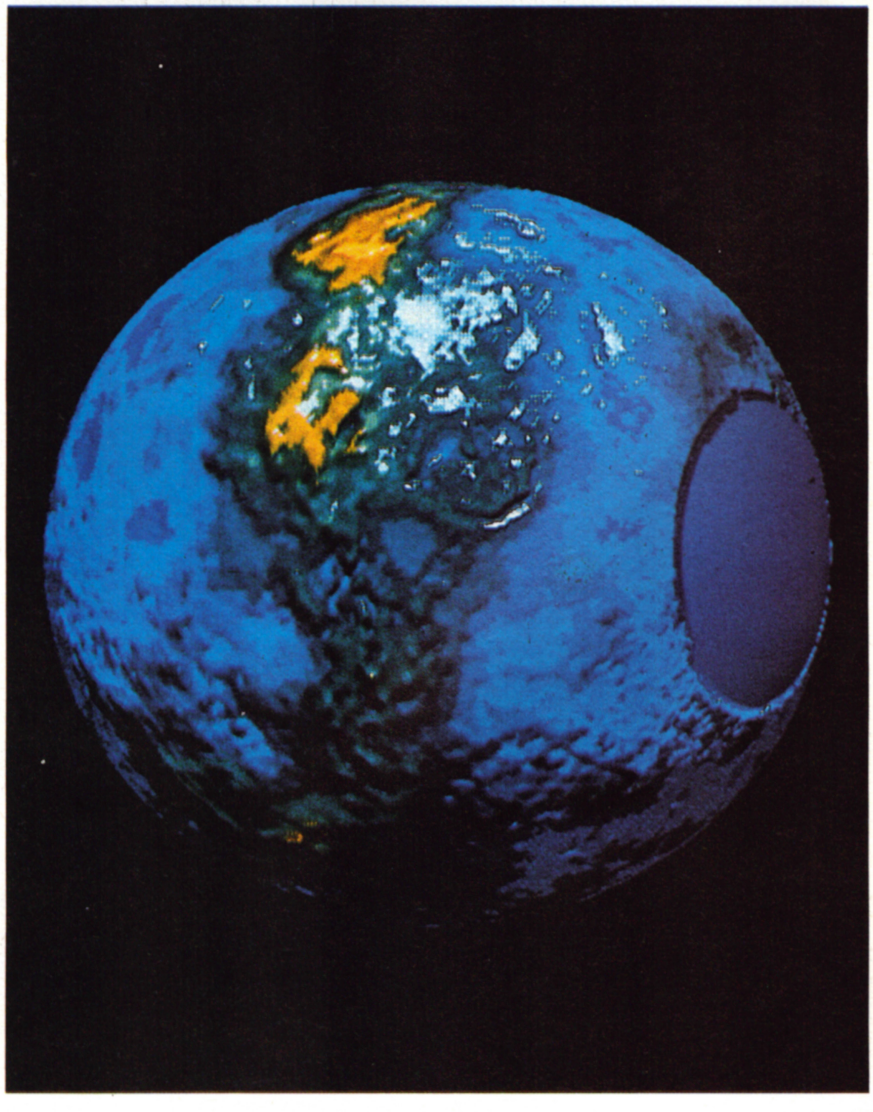


could be made after this stage, but that is not the case. In the translation and understanding of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, a major breakthrough was achieved when the Rosetta Stone was discovered. This was a slab of stone on which a single message was engraved in three scripts: Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian demotic script and ancient Greek. It was then possible to match the Greek words with the Egyptian symbols, and from then on progress in deciphering ancient Egyptian inscriptions was rapid. The problem in enlarging our vocabulary of 'Extra-terrestrial' is to find one or more Rosetta Stones that our alien friends also possess. Not only that but when we transmit our Rosetta Stones the aliens must recognise what they are. There are several such 'Stones', which we might expect to be meaningful to any race that has reached our type of scientific and technological civilisation.

One of these is the periodic table of the elements. The second astronomical fact of life, the sameness of the Universe (see page 2583), tells us that no matter where you go in the Universe you find that all objects are made up of the same elements and in much the same relative proportions by mass. About 70 per cent is made of hydrogen, about 27 per cent consists of helium, while carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and neon make up some two per cent. Sodium, magnesium, aluminium, silicon, calcium and iron make up no more than one per cent and the rest is a mixture of over 80 other elements. An atom of any of these elements differs from an atom of any other element in the number of basic 'building blocks' – electrons, neutrons and protons – from which it is constructed. Hydrogen is the simplest, with a nucleus consisting of one proton, about which orbits one electron. The 92 elements can be arranged in order of increasing complexity and their systematically varying chemical characteristics in a table known as the periodic table of elements. Any civilisation that has reached our level of scientific knowledge will probably have the ability to construct the periodic table of the elements. This is therefore a logical Rosetta Stone to provide the necessary body of information upon which a complete understanding of the other's language can be built. In justification of this claim, consider the following.

Lessons in our language

The table is a vast body of nuclear, chemical, electrical and numerical information. It can be used to define natural units for distance, mass, electrical charge and time. With its aid we can teach the aliens our words 'hydrogen', 'helium', 'carbon', 'electron', 'proton', 'neutron' and so on. By sending symbolic descriptions of chemical reactions with information about these reactions we would be presenting our correspondents with easily



Further reading
A.G.W. Cameron (ed.), *Interstellar communication*, Benjamin (New York) 1963
Stephen H. Dole, *Habitable planets for Man*, Blaisdell (New York) 1964
I.S. Shklovskii and Carl Sagan, *Intelligent life in the Universe*, Pan 1977

understood lessons in our language. By this time, in addition, the mutual understanding of mathematics would enable pictures to be sent in much the same way that thousands of pictures of Jupiter and Saturn were sent back to Earth from the Voyager spacecraft – namely, in digital form. The signal would consist of a stream of numbers, representing information about the brightness and colour of the picture at each point.

At international conferences devoted to the search for extra-terrestrial life, it is often suggested at this point that the next thing to do would be to send out, suitably coded, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, thus presenting our alien friends with a comprehensive picture of Earth's civilisations. It has also been suggested that if we do this, revealing our turbulent, warlike, greedy, feckless state, our pen pals would sign off, not wanting to have any more to do with us. That chance, of course, we would have to take, in the hope that they would be more impressed with our positive achievements.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, far from it being impossible to speak 'Extra-terrestrial', it would only be a matter of time and patience before the ability to speak to each other had been achieved. From then on, progress would be limited only by the speed of radio.

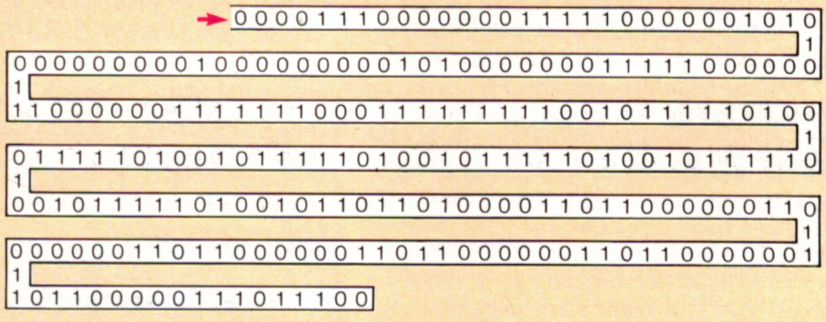
It is in fact clear from the outset that for all but the nearest planetary systems, where the time between question and answer is much less than a century, the interstellar conversation would be between human race and alien race – not between individual human and alien beings. One generation would ask its questions and hope that its descendants would think the answers worth having. For at least a percentage of questions this would certainly be so. Other races, with other histories and perhaps with other senses, would surely have perspectives on this mysterious Universe worth sharing. The only snag is that the third astronomical fact of life – namely the age of the Universe and our late arrival on the scene – makes it probable that we are among the most primitive natives of the lot, with little or nothing to barter in exchange for the aliens' information. Even so, the attempt is worthwhile, for the prize is great. To know that the human race is not alone in a huge Universe would remove the numbing suspicion that life on Earth is merely a highly improbable and purely temporary episode in the Universe's career.

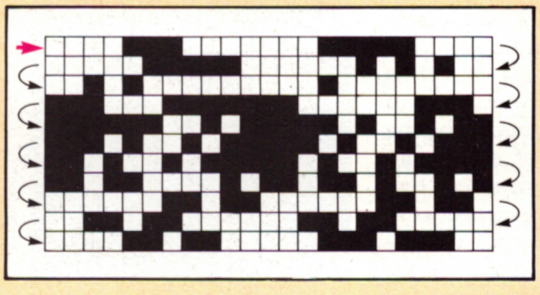
Left: two galaxies 'seen' at a radio wavelength of 21 centimetres. Clouds of hydrogen in space emit radio 'noise' at this wavelength, on which aliens' messages may well be broadcast

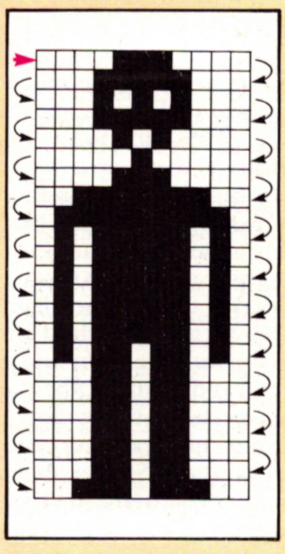
Below left: the surface of Venus, as revealed by radar carried in a space probe. The radar data were sent back to Earth as a string of numbers: the same principle could be used to send pictures to aliens

In black and white

A television picture could be transmitted to intelligent extra-terrestrials in binary code (right): that is, as a string of zeroes and ones. Each symbol represents a single pixel (picture cell) – 0 for a white pixel, 1 for a black pixel. But how can we convey to our listeners that we intend the sequence of digits to be interpreted as a television picture? A strong hint could be given by sending, say, 253 such symbols. Mathematically inclined aliens will notice that this number is equal to 11×23 and that there are no other numbers that can be multiplied together to form it. This, it is to be hoped, would suggest to them that the numbers refer to an array either of 23 columns of 11 elements, or of 11 columns of 23 elements. If they try to assemble the picture in the first of these ways, they will get a 'scrambled' result (right). When they try it the other way they will get a picture (far right) that, if we are lucky, will be intelligible to them. Just such a message has already been beamed into space. It was sent by the giant radio dish at Arecibo (see page 246). It was aimed at a tightly packed cluster of stars called M13 and therefore has a good chance of passing through a large number of planetary systems. A sequence of 1679 digits was sent: this could be turned only into a 23×73 array, in which there was room for a wealth of information. The atomic numbers of five elements important to life – oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus and hydrogen – were given. Then formulae followed showing how these are built up into DNA, the genetic material that governs our heredity. And, among much else, a small humanoid figure was included. Scientists who did not know the code proved able to 'crack' it – which encourages the hope that aliens can. Unfortunately, any reply from M13 will reach us no sooner than AD 50,000, because the cluster is at an immense distance from us.







At home with the Ripper

Did two extraordinary Victorian women stumble upon the identity of Jack the Ripper when they opened a locked trunk belonging to the mysterious Dr Donstan – who lived with them? FRANCIS KING tells the story

ONE BIOGRAPHER of Aleister Crowley (see page 2081) has remarked that his subject was clearly at least half mad, for he believed that Jack the Ripper was no less a person than Madame Blavatsky (see page 2061), revered founder of the Theosophical Society.

Crowley certainly believed many odd things – that, for example, he himself was the true Messiah, 'the Saviour of the World', and that brief details of his life were prophesied in the book of Revelation. He did not, however, believe that the grossly overweight and terminally ill Madame Blavatsky was in the habit of disguising herself as a man and travelling halfway across London in order to murder Whitechapel prostitutes. The biographer's attribution of this odd idea to Crowley seems to have arisen from a misreading of the second sentence of a document written by the magician: 'It is hardly one's first, or even one's hundredth guess, that the Victorian worthy in the case of Jack the Ripper was no less a person than Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.'

What Crowley did believe was that the mysterious killer was an advanced occultist in search of supreme magical power, a skilled astrologer, and a personal acquaintance of many of those active in the leading circles of the Theosophical Society. The man Crowley had in mind used many names and, in the course of a long and adventurous life, had been in many strange situations and, according to his own stories, had witnessed many remarkable things. The man – Crowley called him Dr Donstan – was first identified with the Ripper, not by Crowley, but by a woman usually known simply as 'Cremers'.

Below: the flamboyant occultist Aleister Crowley, who inadvertently gave rise to the incredible theory that Jack the Ripper was no less than Madame Blavatsky (far right). The mistake arose from a misreading of Crowley's – admittedly tortuous – prose: 'It is hardly one's first, or even one's hundredth guess, that . . . Jack the Ripper was no less a person than Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.' Certainly the idea of the overweight, ill and greatly revered founder of the Theosophical movement butchering prostitutes would have appealed to Crowley's sense of humour, but it hardly seems likely she was the culprit

Many strange people moved through the occult world of Europe and North America between 1880 and 1940, but few are as mysterious as the woman whom some called 'the Baroness Vittoria Cremers'.

The exact date of her birth, which was probably about 1865, and the identity of her parents are alike unknown. There were rumours that she was the illegitimate child of a member of the Rothschild family – but then similar stories have been told about a host of other men and women. She claimed to be the wife, or perhaps the widow, of a Russian baron, but no one ever encountered this elusive dignitary. Stories about her past were many and varied: she had been an undercover agent of the New York police, fearlessly investigating and exposing organised vice, or perhaps she had been a New York ponce, living on the immoral earnings of her lesbian lovers.

Even on such elementary matters as Cremers's physical appearance and manner of speaking there was no agreement among those who knew her. Thus one former close associate of Cremers described her head as grossly misshapen, her skin as resembling yellow parchment, her hair as 'dirty white', and her habitual facial expression one of hatred and selfish envy. On the other hand, Jean Overton Fuller, the poet and astrologer, who met Cremers at a party in 1935, was impressed by her appearance, which had 'such an authority that all of us were awed . . . small talk foundered upon the power that was in Cremers and our awareness of it.' One person who clearly did not feel 'the power that was in Cremers' was a reporter from either the *Sunday Graphic* or the *Empire News* (accounts vary on this point) who forced his way into the party at which Miss Fuller was present and demanded of Cremers that she should 'tell him her Jack the Ripper story'. Whether or not she did so is uncertain, but it is a fact that she told it to many of her friends.

The story began in the middle years of the 1880s, when Cremers, who at the time could

Left and below: the Ripper murders were lapped up by the media of the day. As victim after victim was found butchered, the police came in for heavy criticism for their incompetence. But suddenly the murders stopped; had the Ripper himself died – or had he been murdered?

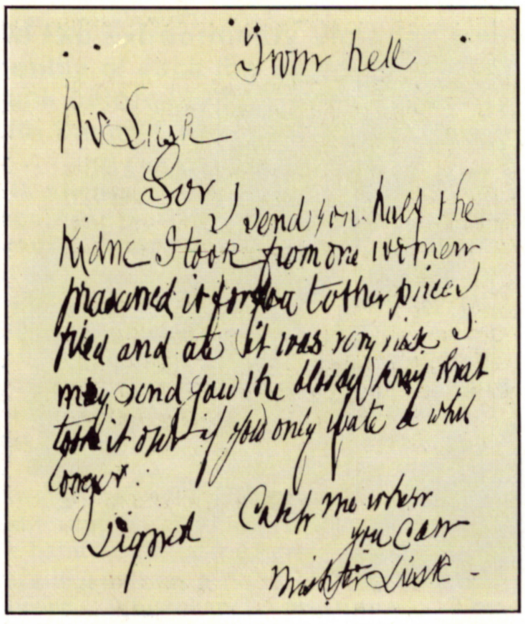
not have been much more than 20, became acquainted with Mabel Collins, a leading member of the Theosophical Society and an associate of Madame Blavatsky. Acquaintance ripened into friendship and, after a few months, Cremers moved into Mabel Collins's home.

Exactly what form the friendship took it is impossible to know. Perhaps the two ladies merely indulged in girlish chat, or carried out psychic experiments – Mabel Collins was a gifted trance medium – and generally enjoyed one another's company. More probably, as was alleged by the late Gerard Heym, an authority on alchemy and modern occult history (see page 880), they had a passionate love affair. If so, however, Mabel Collins was an active bisexual. For another guest in the house was her male lover, the hard-drinking astrologer and occultist who at the time was calling himself Dr Donstan.

'Donstan' was almost as mysterious a character as Cremers. He was a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, claimed to have acquired medical qualifications at various European universities, had served as a mercenary soldier in several minor wars, and at one time, under another name, was reported to have been court martialled and cashiered from the British Army for cheating at cards. His behaviour was erratic, particularly when he had been drinking heavily, and by the autumn of 1889 – the time of the Ripper murders – Mabel Collins was anxious to be rid of him.

One evening, shortly after the Ripper's fifth murder, the two ladies were discussing the case. One of them expressed her astonishment that the killer had not been detected within a few minutes of his first crime. He must, she said, have had bloodstains on the front of his shirt – for it was popularly believed that, while still at the scenes of his crimes, the Ripper was in the habit of eating parts of his victims' bodies.

This part of the conversation was heard



From hell

Mr Lusk

Sor I send you half the Kidne I took from one woman preserved it for you tother piece fried and ate it was very nice I may send you the bloody knife that took it out if you only wate a little longer

Signed Catch me when you can
Mishter Lusk

Left: a letter 'from Hell' – presumably from the Ripper – addressed to the Metropolitan Police. It has been said that the writer's apparent illiteracy was assumed, or even that 'he' was a woman. But one of the most tantalising rumours about the Ripper's identity involved the Baroness Vittoria Cremers, whose forceful personality impressed the poet and astrologer Jean Overton Fuller (below left). 'Cremers' lived with the gifted medium Mabel Collins (below), but also with one Dr Donstan – whose locked trunk held, so it is said, damning evidence that he was the Ripper

by Dr Donstan who, wearing full evening dress, had just returned from the theatre. He gave a short laugh, turned up the collar of his opera cloak, pulled the cape across his shirtfront and remarked, 'You cannot have imagined that the man could be a gentleman, but there are many in evening dress going about the East End, what with opium smoking and one thing or another.'

Something about Donstan's knowingness filled Mabel Collins with terror. She became more determined than ever to get rid of her lover. She could, of course, simply have asked him to leave her house, but if she did this she ran the risk of being blackmailed by Donstan, a man totally devoid of scruples, for she had written him many compromising and sexually explicit love letters. These, so she believed, were still in his possession. Probably, she thought, he kept them in the large, military-style leather trunk that he kept beneath his bed, guarded jealously, and never unlocked in her presence.

Cremers suggested an obvious solution. She and Mabel Collins should break into the trunk, regain and burn the letters, and then, free of any fear of blackmail, get rid of Donstan. The only obstacle was Donstan himself. His movements were irregular, following no timetable. He came and went as he pleased. And should he arrive home and find the two women rifling his trunk his rage might be uncontrollable.

But Cremers solved the problem. She arranged for the delivery of a hoax telegram summoning Donstan to a meeting many miles away. As soon as he had gone she and Mabel Collins broke open the trunk. There were no love letters inside it. Its only contents were five ties, stiff with dried blood.

And there Cremers's story ended. Neither woman reported the matter to the police nor even consulted a solicitor for advice. But Donstan left Mabel Collins's home and, soon afterwards – so it is rumoured – died of alcoholic poisoning in a common lodging house.

Butchery by the stars

Perhaps Donstan was the Ripper, the magician-murderer who, so Crowley and others averred, stalked and murdered East End whores in a quest for occult power. Probably he was possessed of the anatomical knowledge that was demonstrated in the mutilations carried out by the Ripper on his victims. Certainly Donstan was a skilled and practising astrologer, and there are indications that the times and dates of the Ripper murders were not random but chosen in accordance with astrological considerations, either Saturn or Mercury being almost directly on the ascendant (the eastern horizon as drawn on a horoscope) when they took place.

As, against this, it seems most improbable that if Cremers and Mabel Collins seriously thought that Dr Donstan was the bloody menace whose murders had terrified the entire population of London they should not have reported their suspicions to the appropriate authority. Even if Mabel Collins had been too strait-laced to make a full statement to the police – in which she would have had to confess that she, an unmarried lady of hitherto unblemished reputation, had not only had a lover but had also compromised herself by writing to him in sexually explicit terms – surely she could have denounced Donstan anonymously to Scotland Yard? But no such document survives in either of Scotland Yard's bulging 'Suspects' or 'Letters' files on the Ripper case.

Perhaps, however, one of the women did do something that materially altered the case. For the late Gerard Heym always affirmed that 'Cremers killed the Ripper' – and that she did so by the use of magic.

Was the Ripper part of a plot that involved the Masons – and royalty? See page 2658

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,
I refer to the back cover of issue 120 on the subject of the relationship of mental attitudes to pain and illness. As a hypnotherapist I can confirm from my own records much of what you assert, and also that I would like to see much more research carried out in this field, together with a reduction in the number of drugs prescribed for patients with allegedly incurable pain.

There is, however, one aspect of the problem that was not mentioned, a somewhat controversial aspect of hypnotherapy known as 'regressive therapy'. I have used this on many occasions, often with very interesting results, as the following case history may demonstrate.

The patient, a single man in his early thirties, came to me complaining of a persistent pain in his abdomen. He told me that it was sharp and quite localised, and that he had suffered from it for as long as he could remember. He was a short, stockily built man, with a dominant and extrovert character; he held a responsible position in the civil service. For years, he said, he had pestered hospitals and doctors for something to ease the pain, but nothing seemed to help. I tried hypnotising him on several occasions, but he was not a good subject – and still the pain persisted. Over a period of weeks I tried many techniques, all without success. Finally, I discussed the theory of regressive therapy with him, explaining that in some instances the cause (and the cure) for persistent conditions seems to lie in what purports to be a previous existence.

The patient's first reaction was one of amusement but, after much discussion and once he had accepted the idea that neither belief nor disbelief in the theory of reincarnation has any bearing on the results – and having no alternative anyway! – he agreed to try the therapy. Two sessions followed, with no result worthy of note, but on the third session matters came to a head.

He suddenly began to thrash about on the consulting room couch and, in response to my questions, he told me in short gasps that he was 'Geoffrey de _____' (a name I never was able to decipher) and that he was fighting for his life. He gave me no date, but said that he had been involved in a rebellion against 'his Lord' and that the 'men-at-arms' had trapped him in a house. After several moments of living through this experience in his mind he suddenly gave a loud groan and became quite still. I asked him what he was doing and, after a pause, he told me that he was 'hovering just by the ceiling'; in response to further questions he told me that one of the soldiers had 'run his sword through my belly', that he was 'lying on the floor, bleeding like a stuck pig', and that he was dead. He went on to tell me how peaceful he felt and how detached he was from the people he could see. Shortly afterwards he told me that the whole scene was fading and that he was being 'called away'. Nothing of interest occurred after this, and I brought him out of hypnosis.

The patient retained full memory of the episode, and his reaction was a mixture of astonishment and disbelief: he simply could not make up his mind if the sequence had been real or a dream. However, his response to my obvious question was most interesting. 'Pain?' he said. 'Oh *that*! Now I know how I came by it, it's gone!'

He came to see me again several weeks later; the pain had not returned, but he was still concerned about the experience. 'Was it *real*?' he asked me. 'Does it matter?' I replied. 'The pain has gone, the rest is purely academic.'

This is the point. Whether the patient is suffering from an over-active imagination, re-enacting an episode from a long-forgotten book, or genuinely reliving a 'past life' is quite irrelevant. If 'past life' regression can cure a condition, then surely nothing else matters much anyway?
Yours faithfully,
A. B. King Havant, Hampshire

Dear Sir,
I have just read your article in issue 121 on the so-called UFO nests found in cereal fields and the possibility that these are formed by whirlwinds. My own experience in late summer 1981 suggests that this is almost certainly the explanation.

I live on a ridge 450 feet [135 metres] above sea level, about 100 feet [30 metres] above the adjacent land; it is quite steep in parts on the north side and stretches for about 1½ miles [2.5 kilometres]. One day, at about noon, I was inside my cottage when suddenly I heard a very loud roaring sound, not unlike an express train. I ran outside to see what it was, but saw nothing; the noise was now something like the sound of a falling bomb.

I thought no more of this until the following morning when taking my dog for a walk. Then I saw two large circles, about 25 feet [7.6 metres] in diameter, of flattened barley in a nearby field. A neighbour who lives on the north side of the ridge had also heard the roaring noise but could find no cause for it. I wondered if we had heard some part of an aircraft or satellite, or even a small meteor, coming down and, with the local farmer, we investigated the circles but found no debris at all – just flattened barley. The farmer said that sometimes growing conditions made barley collapse at its base, though he could not understand the almost perfect circle.

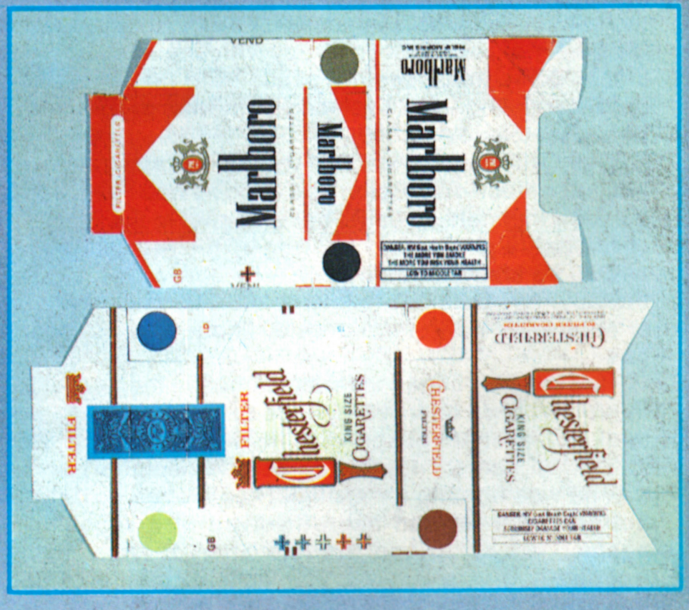
I mentioned the incident to a journalist friend, and an item appeared in the local press during the following week. I was contacted by a farmer who lives under the ridge and who had experienced, at the time I heard the noise, a quite fearsome whirlwind that had run along the side of the ridge and through his farm, scattering hay and straw bales like feathers; it then moved on towards the field where I had found the circles. Later, we heard from golfers at the club at the end of the ridge: they had seen the whirlwind start on the surface of the M50 motorway.

There is little doubt in my mind that the flattened circles, the so-called UFO nests, are caused by whirlwinds: it is too much of a coincidence to be otherwise. Certainly there was no evidence of burning or heat effects on the barley and no indication of anything landing. It was disappointing not to find any 'little green men', but perhaps one day . . .
Yours faithfully,
John Lewis Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

A pack of lies

A rumour is circulating that the cigarette manufacturing company Philip Morris, through its brand Marlboro, has some connection with the Ku Klux Klan – an organisation dedicated to upholding the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant traditions in the USA by opposing practically all 'minority' groups – including blacks, Jews, homosexuals and Catholics

What is the basis of this story? It appears to rest on an idiosyncratic interpretation of the symbols on the Marlboro pack. The characteristic red and white Marlboro chevron motif looks, when turned on its side, like a red K on a white background; there are altogether three of these on the pack – on the front, back and bottom – giving three Ks, KKK, standing for Ku Klux Klan. Looking at the chevron motif another way, it can be seen as a white hood against a red background; the costume of the Ku Klux Klan is a white robe and a white pointed hood. And finally, three 'secret' symbols can be found on the inside flaps of the pack: a gold spot, a black spot and two crosses. These, so it is said, stand for anti-Semitism, racism and anti-Catholicism.

So far, so good. But is there any truth in the allegation that Philip Morris is mixed up with the Ku Klux Klan? *The Unexplained* asked Philip Morris. Their reaction was indignant: Philip Morris has an outstandingly good record of fairness in its employment policy towards minority groups. And besides, if there is a connection between Philip Morris and the Ku Klux Klan, why is there no Klan symbolism on the packs of other Philip Morris brands? As for the Marlboro pack, that is easily explained. The fact that the chevron can also be read as a K is coincidental. The spots on the internal flaps – one gold, the other not black but a very dark blue – are printers' colour quality control marks. These must be around half an inch square (1 square centimetre) to be of any use; and since red is used in this quantity in the pack design, only blue and gold spots are printed. This is standard practice – Philip Morris's Chesterfield pack (below) uses six colours, and five spots. Lastly, the crosses are printers' reference points used to ensure that the design is printed in the right place. Game, set and match to Philip Morris.